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In Memory of Larry Kalevitch: Larry in Tula, Russian Federation-or-theNot-So-Innocents Abroad?

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IN MEMORY OF LARRY KALEVITCH: LARRY IN TULA, RUSSIAN FEDERATION-OR- THE NOT-SO-INNOCENTS ABROAD?

MARILYN CANE*



Larry and I went to Tula, Russian Federation in December. Why would purportedly sane law professors from South Florida choose to go to Russia in December? We went for the adventure, and the challenge. The change from the USSR to the Russian Federation was still quite new. We also wanted to go because our ancestors came from Russia. We would also be teaching an introduction to American business law to students at the Tolstoy University.

I could imagine no better comrade in exploration than my dear friend and colleague, Larry Kalevitch. We went from Moscow to Tula by train. Tula is a city southeast of the capitol. It had been closed to westerners dur-

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ing the Soviet era because it was the city where the Russians manufactured Kalashnikov rifles.¹ It was also famous for its samovars.²

The first night we arrived we were greeted by the faculty. Almost the entire faculty consisted of professionals from non-legal areas. The dean of the law faculty was a physician. There had been no real need for civil lawyers, particularly business lawyers, in the USSR. However, with the collapse of the Communist state and the rise of capitalism, there was a need for business lawyers. The law faculty in Tula looked to the West for models.

The faculty had arranged for a welcome dinner at the university. When Larry and I walked into the room, we heard strains of music. The music was somewhat familiar. Our hosts had chosen it because it was American music. The music was a tape of Don Ho, the master of Hawaiian kitsch, singing "Tiny Bubbles." The tape was also warped, which made it even more weird and wonderful. Larry and I burst out laughing. Not wanting to offend our hosts, we said the laughter was because we were so delighted by their choice of music.

The table was laden with food, champagne from Georgia (the country not the state), and bottles of Left-Handed Man Vodka. As soon as we sat down, we noticed that the vodka bottles were open, and that the kind of caps they had, like old soda bottles, were not designed to be reused. In other words, the vodka was to be consumed there and then. Within a minute a toast was proposed to us. Our glasses were filled with the vodka. "*Za vashe zdorov'e!*" "To your good health!" Down went the first glass. No sips allowed. In another minute, another Russian faculty member lifted her glass, waited for us to refill our glasses and said, "*Das vidanya!*" which can be roughly translated into English as "to the wisdom of your ancestors." Larry and I were already giddy from lack of sleep. The vodka went right to our heads.

1. Tula Arms Plant was founded in February 1712 by a decree of Russian Czar Peter I. "With three centuries of its history 'Tulsky Oruzheiny Zavod' (Tula Arms Plant) is one of the acknowledged world centres of military and advanced technologies." See http://ia.vpk.ru/vpkus/homes/h109/history_.htm.

2. Samovars are a necessary feature of the Russian mode of life and consequently a part of Russian applied art. It is difficult to say when the first ever samovar was made, but they became widely spread throughout the country with the introduction of tea and coffee. Samovars were produced in many towns of Russia, but most famous was Tula, an old center of metalworking. See <http://www.moscow-guide.ru/culture/folkart/samovar/>. "The first samovar factory was founded in Tula by Nasar Usitsin in 1778. The town of gunsmiths became familiar to all the world as the center of samovar manufacture due to rich ore deposits, highly qualified masters who worked metals and location of Tula in the vicinity of Moscow." See http://www.samovar.holm.ru/istr01_e.htm. Larry would have been delighted by my use of these "scholarly" tongue-in-cheek footnotes.

Larry had been to Russia before, to Saratov. He knew to bring small gifts, evocative of America, to be handed out to our hosts. Larry had gone to a souvenir shop in Fort Lauderdale and had purchased pins. The pins displayed a beach ball, with a wave underneath, and had the word "Florida" written across the wave. Larry, who was already quite tipsy, went around the table, handing out these treasures. The Dean asked Larry if this was the official emblem of our state. Without a moment's hesitation, Larry responded that they were indeed, the "official insignia of the State of Florida." I almost fell out of my chair. It was a totally Larry moment. His quick wit, and his acerbic, droll humor were remarkable. After three vodka toasts, I switched to the Georgian champagne (don't ask). Larry was not given this option. The toasts continued. "To America!" "To Russia!" "To The New Russia!" "To American-Russian Friendship!" "To Tolstoy!" "To Left-Handed-Man Vodka!"

After a while the Russians began to sing. Their singing was boisterous. We were asked to sing. Larry and I looked at each other. We sang "God Bless America." They asked for another song. We sang "The 59th Street Bridge Song (Feelin' Groovy)." They appeared to like that. Then they asked us to join in singing some Russian song they were sure we knew, which we didn't. The toasts continued until all of the vodka (about one bottle for 2 or 3 people) was gone. Larry needed help getting to bed. Even the freezing air didn't faze him. The next day we were to commence teaching.

The lecture hall was immense and about fifty students were seated there. On the wall behind the podium was a huge mural of Marx and Lenin. It was surreal to be teaching American business law there. Larry and I decided to use a local business as an example of how to form a corporation. Natasha translated our words. Natasha had a pretty good command of English, but no legal training. So we began by writing "Tula Samovar Corporation" on the board. A hand shot up in the back of the room. The student, a man in his thirties, said something and the class began to laugh. We asked Natasha what he had said. She translated that he said to make our business "Tula Kalashnikov Rifle Corporation"³ because there was a better market for rifles than for samovars.⁴ We then proceeded to write the names of the directors on the board. For these, we had chosen the great Russian literary figures Tolstoy,⁵ Pushkin, and Dostoevsky. The same hand shot up. He said some-

3. See *supra* note 1.

4. See *supra* note 2.

5. Yasnaya Polyana, the name given to writer Leo Tolstoy's country estate where Tolstoy was born in 1828 and where he wrote many of his classics, is located on the outskirts of Tula. Larry and I enjoyed our visit there. We enjoyed it more than the afternoon we spent in the Tula Samovar Museum. That experience can only be described as bizarre and hilarious.

thing and the class laughed again. We asked Natasha what he had said. Once again she translated, "You had better put Stalin on that Board if you want the Company to run correctly." So began our experience in teaching in Tula.

My dear friend Larry was so very bright, clever, demanding, humorous, temperamental, and passionate. Our adventure in Tula made us close friends. My spouse, Karen Michaels, and I had the privilege of attending to Larry in his last months. She would read to him and hold his hand by the hour. I would cook him his favorite foods from his childhood, which included brisket, chicken soup, and homemade apple pie. It gave me something to do for him. Larry gave me his samovar from Tula as a remembrance. I have it next to mine. Those of us who knew him miss him terribly.

"And all people live, not by reason of any care they have for themselves, but by the love for them that is in other people."⁶

6. Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910).